



2021 Enhancing the quality of Australia's international trade statistics

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Contact

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We asked

In October 2021, the ABS consulted with users of international trade statistics on priorities for enhancing the quality and breadth of data on international services statistics, and on changes to content and timing of the monthly international trade publication. [‘Enhancing the quality of Australia’s international trade statistics’](#), outlined the planned and proposed changes to the international merchandise trade publication and the planned and proposed enhancements to services statistics.

You said

10 submissions were received, these came from across federal government, state government and industry. A summary of the feedback can be seen below.

Monthly merchandise trade publication options

Respondents were asked to comment on two publication options. See consultation papers for more information on the options.

Option 2 was the preferred publication, with over 80% of respondents choosing this preference. The main reason cited for option 2 as the preference was the inclusion of seasonally adjusted data.

Services enhancement projects

Respondents were asked to prioritise the projects (1 through to 4) which were aimed at enhancing the quality and breadth of international trade in services statistics. Those projects were:

- More frequent detailed services statistics;
- Statistics on characteristics of service traders;
- Monthly indicator statistics; and
- Other (to be specified).

More frequent detailed services statistics were rated as the highest priority. Respondents also noted a strong interest in more detailed multi-dimensional cross classified data. The second highest priority was statistics on characteristics of service traders, closely followed by monthly indicator statistics.

Additional feedback

In addition, while respondents recognised the need to change and create opportunities for enhancing the international trade in services statistics, they acknowledged that with the imminent reopening of international borders, access to the full suite of monthly international trade data was critical in the short term for informing policy and insights around the COVID-19 recovery.

We did

Given the additional feedback on changes to the monthly trade publication, The ABS has decided, that in the short term, we will continue to produce the [International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia](#) publication in its current form, with no changes to timing or content. The ABS will look to revisit discussions with users on the original options proposed as part of this consultation through 2022. The feedback received on the publication options and services enhancement projects will be used to help inform these discussions.

Of the services enhancements, the immediate focus will be to enhance the quarterly Survey of International Trade in Services, with a particular focus on moving the survey collection timing in line with the reference period. The priority and timing of other services enhancement projects (as outlined in the paper), is still being discussed, noting further enhancements may not be possible in the short term while the extended set of international trade data continue to be produced. More information on the service enhancement projects will be made available in 2022.

Overview

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produces a broad range of data on Australia's economic interactions with the rest of the world. ABS international trade data measures the value of both goods (merchandise) and services imported and exported to and from Australia.

Australia's international trade has been growing steadily over recent years, and so has demand from data users for timely, robust and representative statistics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only heightened interest in trade data, but has also had substantial impact on the quality and availability of key source data used in the compilation of international trade in services statistics.

To meet both the current demand for data and ensure trade statistics are representative, the ABS are seeking input from data users, organisations and the community on:

- the content and timing of the monthly international merchandise trade publication; and
- prioritising projects to enhance the quality of international trade in services statistics.

We recommend you first read the paper [Enhancing the quality of Australia's International Trade Statistics](#) for important background information.

How to make a submission

To make your submission you will need to review the consultation papers attached and complete the online survey linked below.

If you have any questions or issues accessing the survey, please contact us at: international.trade@abs.gov.au.

Consultation papers

[International merchandise trade publication options](#)

[International trade in services statistics enhancements](#)

Why your views matter

Information obtained from this consultation will be used to determine the final content and timing of the future monthly international merchandise trade publication, effective from the January 2022 reference month.

This information will also assist the ABS prioritise projects to enhance the quality of international trade in services statistics.

What happens next

The information gathered from this consultation will be used to determine the final content and timing of the monthly *International Merchandise Trade, Australia* publication (effective from the January 2022 reference month); and to assist the ABS to prioritise projects to enhance measures of international trade in services.

A summary of the findings from this consultation will be made available on the ABS consultation hub. The [ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS will handle any personal information that you provide to us.

Related

 [Consultation paper - International merchandise trade publication options](#)

363.0 KB (PDF document)

 [Consultation paper - International trade in services statistics enhancements](#)

324.6 KB (PDF document)

 [Information paper - Enhancing the quality of Australia's International Trade Statistics](#)

 [International Trade in Goods and Services, Australia](#)

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